

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

040832Z Apr 05

UNCLAS TAIPEI 001620

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
ROBERT PALLADINO
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. AND CROSS-STRAIT
RELATIONS

Summary: Focus of the major Chinese-language Taipei dailies fell on local politics and the possibly upcoming visits to China by KMT Chairman Lien Chan and PFP Chairman James Soong. The centrist "China Times" ran a banner headline on its front page April 4 that read: "James Soong: Seriously considering Beijing's invitation to visit China." On the same day, however, Taiwan's largest daily, the pro-independence "Liberty Times," carried a page two story that said "James Soong questioned the timing and the role of Chiang when he visited China." In addition, the "China Times" noted in an editorial that all three major political parties in Taiwan have been racing to play the cross-strait relations card lately, but the real climax of this gambling game, according to the article, lies in how the behind-the-scenes United States will now play its card. End summary.

"It's the Big Brother's Turn to Show His Card Now"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] noted in an editorial (4/4):

"The three major political parties [in Taiwan] have all been busy playing the cross-strait [relations] card lately. . . But the real climax of this gambling game is to see how the United States, which hides itself behind the game, will play its card.

"The real reason that forced [President] Chen Shui-bian to abandon his plan to write a new constitution for Taiwan, to rectify the island's name, and to return to the so-called new middle-of-the-road route was not the [DPP's] defeat in last year-end's Legislative Yuan elections or Beijing's intimidation. Instead, it was the behind-the-scene strong pressure from the United States that forced Chen to do so. [PFP Chairman] James Soong [faced a similar situation]; Soong found a new political foothold for himself because of [his connection with] the United States, and that was how the Chen-Soong meeting was born. The same for the KMT -- it dared to move westbound boldly to visit Beijing simply because it knows that in the short term, Chen must maintain a moderate attitude toward cross-strait issues. It is the United States who plays the key role in all these series of changes and developments.

"But what really displeased Washington about Chen was not his pro-independence stance but his disobedience. That is why Washington wants to teach Chen a lesson. Chen's recent performance was like a student who tried very hard to do good in order to make up for his demerit record. . . A-bian knows very clearly that an obedient prodigal son can please the United States better than a prodigal son that returns.

"On the other hand, even though the KMT emphasized that its meetings with the Chinese Communist Party were to alleviate cross-strait tensions and accomplish something that the DPP has failed to do, the KMT might, if acting carelessly, likely step on the red line drawn by the United States on the other end. The KMT's move might make the United States which was originally worried about a possible outbreak of conflicts across the Taiwan Strait to start concerning that the accelerated development of the cross-strait relations might run counter to the interests of Washington."

"The United States is in general pleased with the Chen Shui-bian administration's recent performance. But now it may be the KMT's turn to become the target that receives pressure from the United States."

KEEGAN